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Clarke County Easement News

WINTER

2010

Photo Contest Winners Announced

Exhibit Opens March 19th at Fire House Gallery in Berryville

Last fall the Authority challenged area photographers to shoot photos of Clarke County's magnificent open spaces and enter them in a contest to be judged by noted editorial and commercial photographer, Matthew Klein.

The goals of the competition were to:

- Honor the opening of the Clarke County Historical Association's museum exhibit "Our Land Is Our Legacy."
- Celebrate Clarke County's abundant natural riches and perhaps most important,
- Raise awareness about the importance of protecting Clarke's open space for future generations.

Twenty-four photographers, representing every town in Clarke County, accepted the challenge, submitting a total of 65 photographs. Klein singled out eleven winners:

Richard Campbell
 Jo Domenica
 Christy Dunkle
 Tim Farmer
 Janet Hitchen
 Bonnie Jacobs
 Carol Joyce
 Steve Lee
 John Lewis
 Emily Mason
 Karen Shull

Commenting on the entries, Klein

said, "It was a very sophisticated group of images, and I had great difficulty choosing winners. These are the ones that resonated with me personally."

Don't Miss It ... and Help Spread the Word!

The photographs will be on view in a special exhibit "Photo Contest Winners: Celebrating Open Space" in the debut exhibit at the new Fire House Gallery in Berryville, Virginia. Klein will attend the opening on Friday, March 19th. The show runs through Saturday, April 3rd.

Bring family and friends to see the amazing photographs that capture the incredible beauty of Clarke in every season and remind us of our responsibility to be wise and watchful stewards of our bountiful resources.

Supervisors Authorize Amendment to Easement Purchase Program Authority Receives 21 Applications

The County relies on federal and state grants to supplement local funding for easement purchases. These programs require a lengthy grant application process as well as an appraisal of properties considered for grant funding. Many recent purchase applications have not met the grant criteria but do have conservation values that the Easement Authorities would like to protect.



To expand opportunities for purchase of easements on these properties, the Board of Supervisors approved an amendment at its November 17, 2009 meeting allowing the Authority to establish a second purchase option. "Option B" establishes a set price for each Dwelling Unit Right (DUR) the property owner retires, depending upon the property score and owner income. (The easement purchase program was established to provide funding opportunities to low- and moderate-income farmers who may not be eligible for tax credits.)

Properties with scores under 48 would be paid a maximum of \$25,000 per DUR retired. Parcels over 52 would be paid a maximum of \$40,000 per DUR retired. For properties scoring in the discretionary range (48-52), the value would be determined by the Authority on a case-by-case basis.

This alternate approach is already being used by several Virginia localities including Fauquier County, Stafford County and Virginia Beach and offers distinct advantages to all sides:

- **Property owner:** Receives a quick-cash return in exchange for extinguishing unneeded DURs.
- **County:** Saves staff time processing applications
- **Community:** Gets less sprawl and more open space

Option A will be used when the property is deemed eligible for funding from the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection grant. Option B will be used for purchase requests that qualify for other state and federal grant funding.

Though the amendment was approved only recently, the Authority has already used Option B to close on four easements totaling 179 acres and retire eight DURs.

Would YOUR Property Qualify?

To be considered for this new purchase program—funded by state and local funds—your property must meet the following criteria:

- ① Have at least one extra DUR remaining on the property
- ② Be in the Agricultural or Forestal zoning district (most of the County)
- ③ Be eligible for use value taxation (minimum 6 acres in the valley and 21 acres on the mountain)
- ④ Have conservation value (as determined by the scoring process)

Conservation values include open space, natural resources (such as streams), agriculture, forestry, or historic structures.

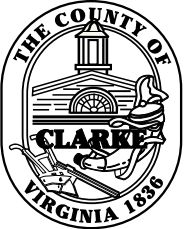
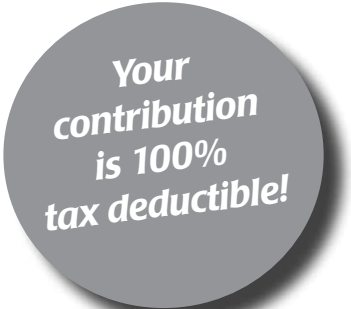
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